

Message Text

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ACTION H-03

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9418
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 SINGAPORE 0266

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OREP (WOLFF, LESTER)
SUBJECT: CODEL WOLFF VISIT TO SINGAPORE

REFS: (A) SINGAPORE 0236, (B) SINGAPORE 0226

1. SUMMARY. CODEL WOLFF VISIT TO SINGAPORE WAS SUCCESSFUL
IN THAT DELEGATION HAD OPPORTUNITY TO REASSURE HIGHEST LEVEL
GOS OFFICIALS ABOUT CONTINUING U.S. INTEREST IN SOUTHEAST
ASIA, TO SET FORTH CONGRESSIONAL ATTITUDES TOWARD HUMAN RIGHTS
AND REFUGEE PROBLEMS, TO MEET WITH SINGAPORE MPS, TO PARTICIPATE
IN CONCURRENT NARCOTICS CONFERENCE, AND TO BE BRIEFED ON
SINGAPORE'S ECONOMIC PROGRAMS. MEETINGS WITH PRIME MINISTER
LEE AND FOREIGN MINISTER RAJARATNAM. REPORTED SEPARATELY IN REFTELS,
ESTABLISHED GOOD RAPPORT AND GAVE INDICATION THAT ADMINISTRATION
POLICY TOWARD EAST ASIA AND PACIFIC WILL RECEIVE CONGRESSIONAL
SUPPORT.
END SUMMARY.

2. ELEVEN-MEMBER CONGRESSSIONAL DELEGATION LED BY CONGRESSMAN
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LESTER WOLFF VISITED SINGAPORE JANUARY 12-15 FOR A BUSY AND
SOMEWHAT COMPLEX SCHEDULE TIED IN WITH THE ADMINISTRATION'S
EAST ASIA NARCOTICS COORDINATORS CONFERENCE, WHICH WAS MEETING
IN SINGAPORE AT THE SAME TIME.

3. EMBASSY BRIEFING WAS HELD MORNING OF JANUARY 13 PRIOR TO CODEL'S
MEETING WITH FOREIGN MINISTER RAJARATNAM (SEE REFTEL A). IN AF-

TERNOON, CHAIRMAN WOLFF LED PANEL OF FOUR CONGRESSMEN IN DISCUSSION OF NARCOTICS CONFERENCE AT WHICH HE ASKED NARCOTICS COORDINATORS TO USE EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO URGE GREATER COOPERATION ON THEIR HOST GOVERNMENTS AND SUGGESTED THAT THERE BE A SECOND COORDINATOR AT EVERY POST.

4. CODEL MEMBERS AND STAFF, ACCOMPANIED BY AMBASSADOR, THEN MET WITH SPEAKER AND SINGAPORE MPS AT PARLIAMENT. AFTER TOUR OF PARLIAMENT BUILDING AND GROUNDS, MEMBERS MET IN SMALL GROUPS WITH MPS AT TEA, A FORMAT WHICH BOTH SIDES SEEMED TO FIND USEFUL AND PLEASANT. CHAIRMAN WOLFF AND AMBASSADOR THEN RETURNED TO CLOSING SESSION OF NARCOTICS CONFERENCE, AFTER WHICH THEY CALLED ON PRIME MINISTER LEE (REF B) FOR BROAD DISCUSSION OF U.S. PRESENCE IN AND POLICY TOWARD SOUTHEAST ASIA, HUMAN RIGHTS AND REFUGEES, AND THE CHAIRMAN'S PROPOSAL FOR A U.S. - ASIAN INTER-PARLIAMENTARY GROUP. SIGNIFICANT ASPECT OF MEETING WAS ASSURANCE GIVEN BY CHAIRMAN WOLFF THAT U.S. WOULD REMAIN A PACIFIC NATION AND THAT ADMINISTRATION POLICY IN THIS REGION WOULD RECEIVE CONGRESSIONAL SUPPORT.

5. CONGRESSMEN, SELECTED STAFF, AND WHITE HOUSE STAFF MEMBER, ATTENDED DINNER HOSTED IN THEIR HONOR BY PM EVENING JANUARY 13. GUEST LIST INCLUDED DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER/DEFENSE MINISTER GOH, FOREIGN MINISTER AND LARGE SEGMENT OF SINGAPORE'S SENIOR GOVERNMENT AND BUSINESS LEADERSHIP. CONGRESSMEN'S WIVES ATTENDED SEPARATE DINNER HOSTED BY MRS. LEE. AFTER DINNER, PM ARRANGED FOR CONFIDENTIAL

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GROUP DISCUSSION INVOLVING ALL CONGRESSMEN AND SENIOR STAFFERS. CONGRESSMAN MITCHELL AGAIN RAISED QUESTION OF WITHDRAWAL OF U.S. GROUND FORCES FROM KOREA, SAYING HE WAS PERSONALLY OPPOSED, AND ASKED PM'S OPINION. LATTER SAID "LITMUS TEST" WAS JAPAN, AND IF WHAT WE DID WAS ALL RIGHT BY JAPANESE, "IT'S ALL RIGHT BY US." HE WARNED, HOWEVER, THAT IF JAPANESE WERE NOT SATISFIED, "WE WILL KNOW, EVEN IF THEY DON'T TELL YOU." ON PROTECTIONISM, HE TOOK "APOCALYPTIC" VIEW--IF ANOTHER 1929-LIKE CRASH OCCURS DUE TO WORLDWIDE TRADE BARRIERS, EXISTING ECONOMIC SYSTEM WOULD NOT SURVIVE AND WORLD THEREAFTER WOULD BE VERY UNPLEASANT. SUBJECT OF HUMAN RIGHTS WAS TOUCHED UPON, WITH CONGRESSMAN RANGEL EXPLAINING U.S. EXPERIENCES IN THIS REGARD, BUT DISCUSSION WAS INTERRUPTED BY ENTRY OF THE LADIES.

6. ON MORNING OF JANUARY 14, AMERICAN BUSINESS COUNCIL HOSTED BREAKFAST FOR CODEL AT WHICH ABC PRESIDENT AND GOVERNORS ASKED CONGRESSIONAL SUPPORT OF U.S. INVESTORS ABOARD. CONGRESSMEN RANGEL, GUYER AND DANIELSON REPLIED ON BEHALF CODEL, EMPHASIZING NEED FOR U.S. BUSINESS TO INFORM AND PERSUADE AMERICAN PUBLIC OF ADVANTAGES FOR U.S. CAPITAL INVESTMENT ABROAD.

7. CODEL SPLIT INTO THREE GROUPS FOR REMAINDER OF MORNING, ONE

GROUP ATTENDING NARCOTICS CONFERENCE POSTMORTEM, A SECOND GOING ON A TOUR OF JURONG INDUSTRIAL TOWN, AND THE THIRD ATTENDING A BRIEFING BY HIGH-LEVEL GOS ECONOMIC OFFICIALS, INCLUDING MINISTER OF STATE FOR FINANCE GOH CHOK TONG, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BOARD CHAIRMAN NGIAM TONG DOW AND PERMANENT SECRETARY HOWE YOON CHONG.

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8. DURING ECON BRIEFING, GOS OFFICIALS DESCRIBED SINGAPORE'S ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL SUCCESSES --HIGH GROWTH RATE, LOW INFLATION AND UNEMPLOYMENT, PUBLIC HOUSING CONSTRUCTION, FAMILY PLANNING, SOCIAL SECURITY (CENTRAL PROVIDENT FUND) -- AND CHARACTERISTICALLY FORESAW FUTURE PROGRESS AS MORE DIFFICLT THAN PAST PERFORMANCE. THEY EMPHASIZED SINGAPORE'S NEED FOR U.S. INVESTMENT AND GREATER ACCESS TO U.S. AND OTHER DEVELOPED COUNTRY MARKETS, ITS VULNERABILITY TO WORLD ECONOMIC CONDITIONS, AND THE INADEQUACY OF PER CAPITA GNP AS A MEASURE OF SINGAPORE'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT LEVEL BECAUSE OF UNIQUE ECONOMIC STRUCTURE. CONGRESSMAN MITCHELL, THE ONLY CONGRESSMAN TO ATTEND FIRST PART OF GOS BRIEFING, ASKED HOW GOS SEES DOLLAR DEPRECIATION. GOH REPLIED THAT IN HIS VIEW IT RESULTED FROM LACK OF CONFIDENCE IN U.S. ADMINISTRATION'S ECONOMIC AND MONETARY POLICISS AS WELL AS SIZE OF U.S. TRADE DEFICIT. MITCHELL DEPLORED LACK OF PROGRESS TOWARD U.S. ENERGY POLICY BUT SAID HE BELIEVES ADMINISTRATION IS FINALLY GETTING ITS ACT TOGETHER. SUBSEQUENT DISCUSSION DEALT WITH GOS HOUSING POLICY, TAX STRUCTURES, ECONOMIC PLANNING, AND WAGE POLICY.

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9. IN AFTERNOON, CONGRESSMEN WOLFF, GUYER AND MITCHELL HELD PRESS CONFERENCE (BEING REPORTED IN MORE DETAIL IN SEPTTEL) AT WHICH WOLFF STRESSED CONTINUITY OF U.S. INTEREST IN SOUTHEAST ASIA -- "THE U.S. IS A PACIFIC NATION". IN REPLY TO A QUESTION, CONGRESSMAN MITCHELL SAID THAT IN HIS VIEW PER CPITA GNP IS NOT NECESSARILY AN APPROPRIATE MEASURE OF SINGAPORE'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, GIVEN THE LACK OF AN AGRICULTURAL HINTERLAND AND THE LARGE FOREIGN INVESTMENT PRESENCE HERE. (THIS REPLY WAS FEATURED ON SINGAPORE TELEVISION REPORT OF PRESS CONFERENCE. OTHER TELEVISION REPORTS COVERED MEETING WITH FOREIGN MINISTER ANF DINNER WITH PRIME MINISTER.)

10. EMBASSY COMMENT: CODEL VISIT WAS VERY SUCCESSFUL IN AFFORDING MEMBERS OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS VARIETY OF ISSUES WITH HIGHEST LEVEL GOS OFFICIALS. GOS RECEIVED CODEL HOSPITABLY AND CLEARLY WELCOMED OPPORTUNITY TO EXCHANGE VIEWS AND EXPLAIN ITS VIEWPOINT ON ISSUES (INCLUDING HUMAN RIGHTS AND REFUGEES) TO CONGRESSMEN. NUMBER OF CONGRESSMEN EXPRESSED PLEASURE (AND IN SOME CASES SURPRISE) AT THE PROSPEROUS, ORDERLY ATMOSPHERE OF THIS "CLEAN, GREEN" CITY-STATE.
HOLDRIDGE

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